Key Takeaways: June 2018

Cleveland Metropolitan School District is making strides on many fronts: helping families through the school choice process, improving school leadership, and expanding school autonomy. These efforts are anchored by Cleveland's *Plan for Transforming Schools*, a citywide, voter-funded improvement strategy that includes the district and participating charter schools. Despite improvements on some metrics, like graduation rates, overall Cleveland's achievement rates remain low, especially when compared to other large urban cities. Reforms are still evolving, but as leaders of the Cleveland Plan re-evaluate strategies at the five-year mark, they will need to use the strong foundation they have already built to refocus goals to aggressively address persistently low-performing schools and redesign or consolidate under-enrolled schools. This will require more coordination across the diverse charter sector and improved engagement with families most impacted by low-performing schools.

Challenges Ahead

▶ **Addressing underenrolled and low-performing schools**

Education leaders in Cleveland acknowledge that, despite steps taken over the last several years to close and redesign schools, there are still too many low-performing and under-enrolled district and charter schools, especially at the K–8 level. CMSD leaders, alongside charter operators and authorizers, must take aggressive steps to close or consolidate under-enrolled and low-performing schools, while being careful and strategic about redesigning or opening new options. School closures are never easy, but making use of clear and consistent criteria for closure or consolidation and being public and transparent about processes can help. District leaders could make their existing internal school performance framework public so families can see how their school compares on key metrics. Additionally, communicating with families affected far in advance about their school's status, establishing clear opportunities for input and how it will be used, and showing families what their alternatives are, have helped families feel supported in these transitions in other cities. These closures and consolidations will also be more palatable and result in better outcomes for students when better options are available. Interviewees indicate that CMSD has had success with its redesigned high schools and is beginning to follow suit with redesigned K–8 options. In addition to building community and business partnerships as part of these redesigns, district leaders can consider partnering with charter operators in order to build more high-quality school choices.

▶ **Improving coordination within the charter sector**

Cleveland has a robust charter sector that enrolls about 30% of the city's public school students. Like district schools, charter schools have variable quality. While some charter schools coordinate with CMSD as formal partners or through the Cleveland Compact, around 60% of charter schools do not work with the district or other education entities in either way. In a city with nine different authorizers, too many schools, and chronic low performance, increased coordination is likely necessary to improve education for all students. One barrier to wider charter engagement is that many charter schools want to preserve their autonomy, and don't see the benefit to coordination. However, there are several areas that all charters could benefit from partnering on and which could be a first step toward deeper coordination. First, there is no centralized data collection around charter talent, and there is a perception among interviewees that teachers and school leaders are of mixed quality. Through shared pipeline or recruiting efforts, like those that other cities have tried, the charter sector could share responsibility for growing talent. Second, charters struggle with low funding from the state and scare access to facilities. A coalition of high-quality charter schools could advocate together for fairer funding and increased access to facilities. No existing organizations provide an opportunity for all charter schools to advocate together. This could occur through expanded work by the Cleveland Compact or the Transformation Alliance, or it may require a new, third-party organization that works only with charter operators.

▶ **Helping families find and enroll in the right school**

In CRPE's 2017 parent survey, parents reported that finding the information on schools is a challenge, and education leaders reported in 2018 that the varied enrollment processes across charter and district options are a barrier for families. While the Transformation Alliance already provides a cross-sector school guide and there are new programs to help students choose high schools, many cities are exploring high-touch advocacy programs to help families understand options. The Alliance has just begun to pilot such a program in one neighborhood, but philanthropic support of an existing community-based organization to evaluate and expand the Alliance's new program might help ensure that the most underserved families gain access to the evolving school options. Beyond helping families access information, there are interim steps that education leaders could take to simplify enrollment processes like aligning deadlines, building a common application for only charter schools, and, when leaders are ready, engaging a neutral third party to build a unified system so that autonomous charters feel more comfortable with the process.

Spotlight

Mayor-Led Coalition Crafts Initiatives, Tracks Progress to Transform Schools

In many school systems, the increasing complexity of governance can create new collective action problems. Led by Mayor Frank Jackson, a coalition of leaders from a variety of sectors in Cleveland has managed to buck typical patterns of turnover and siloed work to focus on shared goals through the Cleveland Plan for Transforming Schools.

Through the Plan, leaders, representing the district, mayor's office, chamber of commerce, philanthropy, a variety of charter schools, the community, and nonprofits meet on a regular basis to track progress on goals and work on initiatives.

City leaders describe several factors that support this voluntary partnership. Most leaders have been involved since the beginning of the Plan in 2012 and have built solid relationships and trust. There are clear metrics for success, and partners hold each other accountable for taking action. Different interests and priorities arise among members, but they have established citywide shared goals that are at the forefront of their collaboration. And they are clear on how each player fits into the bigger picture.

Cleveland leaders still have work to do to meet their goals, and they can't let satisfaction with progress to date get in the way of accelerating improvement. But the foundations for successful collective action have been built to support future success.
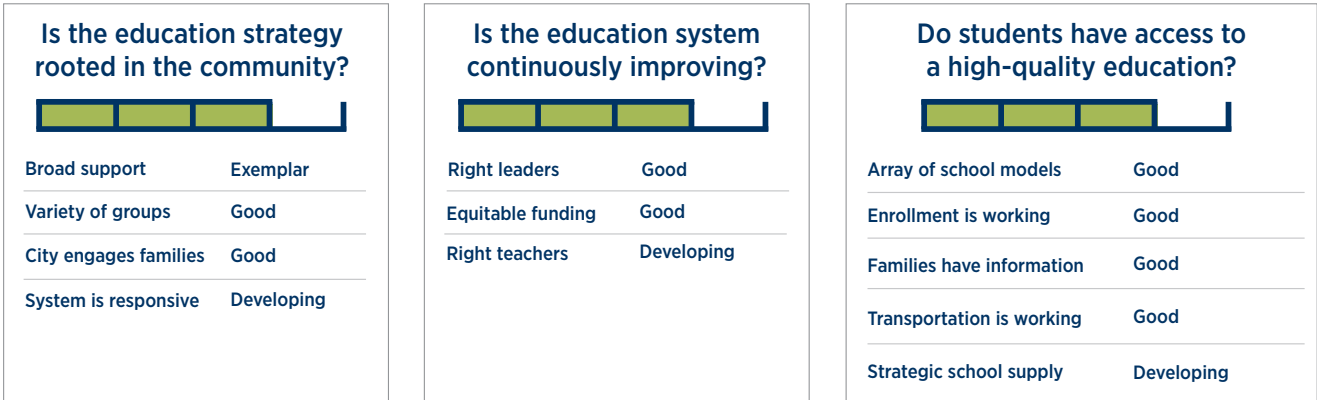
New School Designs Prepare Students for High-Wage Employment

CMSD leaders have built a promising school design process that combines design principles, data on enrollment and neighborhood needs, and community engagement to develop K–12 school models that align with regional economic demands and community business assets.

School design teams are made up of local businesses and families, and have community asset maps developed by the district and regional economic trends commissioned by a local funder. As a result of this work, two IT and tech-focused school models have opened on the west side of the city, where the city's manufacturing companies and tech firms are concentrated (in addition to two on the Eastside). Additionally, just this year, CMSD opened an Aerospace and Maritime High School and another high school with a life science focus through partnership with Cleveland Metropark Zoo.

These models prepare students for high-growth, high-wage employment opportunities in the Cleveland area. CMSD is now using this process to engage the communities around several K-8 school redesigns.

System Reforms

Is the education strategy rooted in the community?

Broad support	**Exemplar**
Variety of groups	**Good**
City engages families	**Good**
System is responsive	**Developing**

Is the education system continuously improving?

Right leaders	**Good**
Equitable funding	**Good**
Right teachers	**Developing**

Do students have access to a high-quality education?

Array of school models	**Good**
Enrollment is working	**Good**
Families have information	**Good**
Transportation is working	**Good**
Strategic school supply	**Developing**

Little in Place **Developing** **Good** **Exemplar** **Increase or Decrease**

Each indicator is scored with a rubric on a 4-point scale. We added the scores for the indicators to get an overall goal score. An arrow shows increase or decrease from the 2017 score.

Key Takeaways: System Reforms

Guided by the Cleveland Plan and long-term leadership, education leaders have made progress over the past five years on improving school information, supporting families during the school choice and school closure processes, and creating community-based school options. Work is still needed to improve coordination in school siting, streamline enrollment, and respond to community input.

Is the education strategy rooted in the community?

Good

Is the whole community engaged? Education is a citywide endeavor. When families, community organizations, and city leaders have the opportunity to provide feedback and share in the vision, the strategy is more likely to be sustainable and meet the needs of all students. In this goal, we look at how well the city is doing with engaging key stakeholders.

Exemplar

Is there a strong and deep coalition of support for the education strategy?

Cleveland's *Plan for Transforming Schools* continues to guide the city's education strategy, providing opportunity for strong civic alignment. The alliance supporting the strategy includes the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD), the mayor, leaders in the charter sector, teachers, union leaders, business leaders, and parent representatives. That array of stakeholders continues to be represented on the Transformation Alliance's board and voters have twice approved levy funding for the Plan. This group of leaders is now championing a new cross-city school improvement effort Say Yes to Education, which provides scholarships for postsecondary training and education and coordinates and increases capacity for school-based wraparound supports for students and families.

Good

Are a variety of groups engaged in education?

Local businesses and nonprofits, the chamber of commerce, a coalition of 40 churches known as the Greater Cleveland Congregations, local funders, university leaders, and the national nonprofit United Way all support and engage with education in the city. Neighborhood-based community and civic organizations, including Community Development Corporations, are also involved, but the degree varies by region. The Transformation Alliance engages families, but there are no grassroots parent groups involved in the strategy.

Good

Does the city engage families in educational decisions that impact them?

The district has strong procedures to engage families during school redesigns, but charter procedures differ by school and both sectors lack clear procedures for engaging families during school closures. CMSD has developed a step-by-step process to involve families and communities in redesigning curricular models for existing schools. Currently, the district is working with 14 different school communities to ensure redesigned schools incorporate community assets. The charter sector is governed by nine different authorizers; there are no sector-wide practices guiding charter school engagement with families during school openings. Cleveland has many underenrolled and low-performing schools, both district and charter. There have been a few closures and consolidations in recent years, but processes to engage communities remain challenging. The Transformation Alliance helps families find new options when a school closes.

Developing

Does the education system respond to community feedback?

The district's Office of Family and Community Engagement provides opportunities for community feedback and engagement. In district schools, active PTAs are able to successfully advocate for their schools. There is a perception among some community leaders, however, that pockets of the city struggle to advocate for better resources and opportunities, despite available avenues through local government and community-based groups. The quality of school-level engagement varies widely within the charter sector. For example, based on limited interviews from 2017, it appears that some charter schools are not adequately informing parents where they can go when they have a grievance with their school. In 2017, the Transformation Alliance started to explore ways to better support family advocacy, but the work is still early.

Is the education system continuously improving?

Good

Do schools have the resources they need? School improvement happens at the school level, but making sure resources are available requires sound, citywide policy. Having the right talent in a city is critical for schools to be able to provide students with a quality education. Schools should also have control over their budgets so they have the resources to address the needs of their student population.

Good

Do schools have the kinds of leaders they need?

CMSD is intentional about aligning leadership with district initiatives. There is no data or strategy on school leadership across the charter sector. CMSD has been working for several years to attract, develop, and provide support for autonomous school leaders, which is a high priority under the Cleveland Plan, and is working to reorient the central office to help school leaders. The district uses internal pipelines like the Aspiring Principals Academy and recruits nationally; however, quality still varies by school. There is no central source of information about charter leaders across the nine charter authorizers, and no sectorwide or citywide leadership strategy.

Good

Does funding equitably follow students?

Cleveland allocates more than 5% but less than 50% of district money to schools using a student-based allocation formula (based on analysis of fiscal year 2017-18). The district is developing the central office supports for principals to use their budgeting autonomy. The district provides vendor report cards and menus of optional resources.

Developing

Do schools have the kinds of teachers they need?

CMSD is using data to identify where they are getting their best candidates to guide central office recruitment, plan clearer teacher leader pathways, build retention strategies, and design central office supports to school-level teams that hire teachers. CMSD has had success with recruitment through its TeachCleveland campaign. While the district is working on several strategies and has its own data collection process, there is no centralized data collection across charter schools, making it impossible for CRPE researchers or others to fully understand the talent issues across the city. But there is a perception among interviewees that within the charter sector, teacher quality varies widely across schools. CMSD and the charter sector have worked together a few times on collaborative professional development efforts and have at times worked with a local university on pipeline development.

Do students have access to a high-quality education?

Good

Do school choice and supply meet family needs? This goal addresses how well the city is doing with providing families access to quality schools. We look at what the city is doing to ensure quality schools are in every neighborhood, and how well the choice process is working for families who want to use it.

Good

Is the enrollment process working for families?

CMSD uses a common enrollment and lottery system for all district schools, and has recently modified the timeline so that all parts of the enrollment process fall within the school year. This helps to make sure staff are available to support families. Each charter school has its own application and deadline. Early discussions are underway about the prospect

of a unified enrollment system, and the need for more coordination around this has been cited. While this would streamline the process, our 2017 survey of 400 parents in the city identified enrollment as less of a barrier than other aspects of the application process: families reported that finding transportation and information were greater difficulties. A higher percentage of district families than charter families reported difficulty with understanding school eligibility (26% district vs. 21% charter) and completing confusing paperwork (19% district vs. 14% charter).

Good

Do families have the information they need and know how to use it?

The Cleveland Transformation Alliance produces a consolidated information guide, both online and in print, that allows families to compare choices across charter and district schools. The guide is regularly updated, and the online version will soon be redesigned for greater usability. But it does not provide consistent information about curriculum or allow families to compare schools by instructional model. The Alliance, CMSD, and city nonprofits host community events to support families during the school choice process. For example, the Tru2U mentor program provides coaching for 8th graders on high school options. Despite this work, in a 2017 survey, about a third of charter school families and a quarter of district families said that finding enough information was a challenge during the application process. 2018 interviewees report that finding and making sense of information remains a challenge, especially for families interested in charter schools. Families of students with special needs struggle to understand their rights to services or find a school that's a good fit.

Good

Is transportation working for families?

CMSD provides bus service to K–6 students, free public transit passes to citywide high schools, and starting in fall 2018, will provide bus service to K-6 charter schools. Among families surveyed in 2017, transportation was a greater barrier than enrollment or information during the school choice process; charter school families reported this at a slightly higher rate than district school families (38% charter vs. 32% district). While access to transportation will soon improve for families attending charter schools, community members in 2017 said that families would prefer to attend a school close to home if given the option.

Good

Does the school supply represent an array of models?

Of both charter and district schools that opened or restarted between 2014-15 and 2017-18, about a third use a nontraditional instructional model, including Montessori, dual language, and competency-based models. In general, CMSD's move toward autonomy has resulted in greater curricular variety among district schools, and the focus on community partnerships has created a variety of career prep schools. But in our 2017 parent survey, fewer than half (44%) said there is a great deal of variety between schools, and 37% reported that finding a good fit school is a difficulty during the application process.

Developing

Is the city strategically managing its school portfolio?

CMSD uses an internal framework to guide school opening and closing decisions. However, the city has nine different charter authorizers and no central body to navigate and prioritize neighborhood needs citywide. Recent reports indicate that, while opening high-quality high school options has been an area of success for Cleveland, more planning and attention is needed on siting coordination and quality among K–8 options for both district and charter schools. Charter and district schools have been closed and redesigned in recent years, but 2018 interviewees report that the city still has too many underenrolled and poor-performing schools in both sectors. The need for the city to push harder on their goal of having high-quality options in every neighborhood is reflected in 2017 survey data: over half of families in Cleveland still attend their neighborhood-assigned school (53%), and 45% say that finding a school with strong academics is a challenge during the application process.between schools, and 37% reported that finding a good fit school is a difficulty during the application process.

Data & Scoring

Where did we get this information?

▶ Interviews with district, charter, and community leaders

▶ Policy documents from district, charter, and state websites

▶ School data from each city

▶ A 400-parent survey administered in March, 2017 in Cleveland, Denver, Indianapolis, Memphis, New Orleans, Oakland, and Washington, D.C.

How did we score the system reforms and goals?

▶ Each indicator is scored with a rubric on a 4-point scale. We added the scores for the indicators to get an overall goal score. See the Methodology & Resources page for details.

Score Levels

| Little in place | Developing | Progressing | Excelling | Increase or Decrease |

Key Takeaways: Student & School Outcomes

In 2013-14, students were proportionately enrolled in advanced math coursework in high school, but in the same year, white students enrolled in top-scoring elementary and middle schools at higher rates than they enrolled in lower-performing schools. City graduation rates remained far below the state's. School proficiency rates in math and reading did not show statistically significant gains relative to the state between 2011-12 and 2014-15.

Is the education system continuously improving?

How does the city's graduation rate compare over time?

CLEVELAND
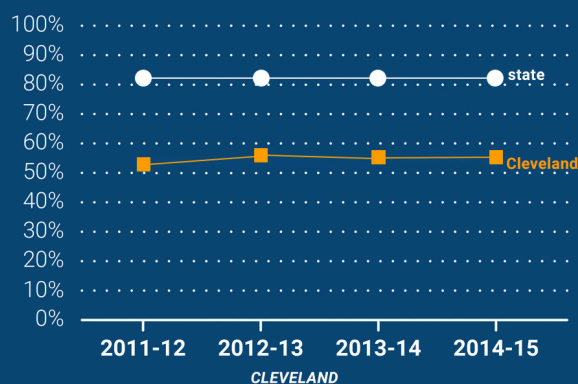
▶ In 2014-15, the city's graduation rate was below the state's.

Data: Percent of first-time 9th grade students graduating in four years, citywide and statewide.

Source: EDFacts Initiative, U.S. Department of Education, Assessment and Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates Data, 2011-12 to 2014-15.

How does the city's math performance compare to the state's over time?

No Improvement
relative to state

CLEVELAND

▶ Between 2011-12 and 2014-15, the city's proficiency rate trends in math mirrored the state's. In 2014-15, the city's proficiency rate was below the state's.

Data: The city's estimated gains in proficiency rates across elementary and middle schools, standardized at the state level and controlling for student demographics.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2011-12 to 2014-15.

How does the city's reading performance compare to the state's over time?
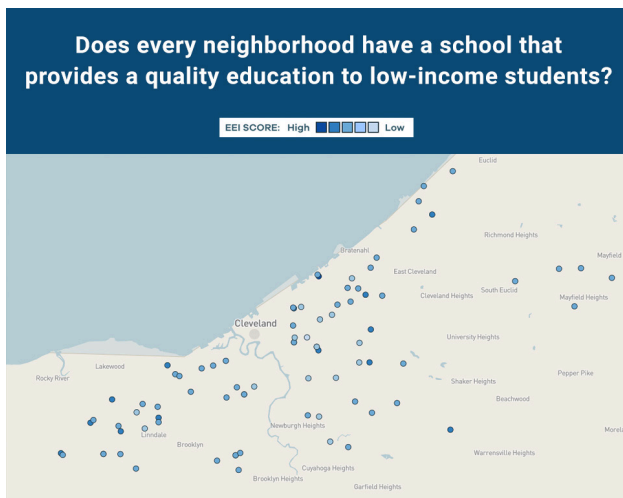
No Improvement
relative to state

CLEVELAND

▶ Between 2011-12 and 2014-15, the city's proficiency rate trends in reading mirrored the state's. In 2014-15, the city's proficiency rate was below the state's.

Data: The city's estimated gains in proficiency rates across elementary and middle schools, standardized at the state level and controlling for student demographics.

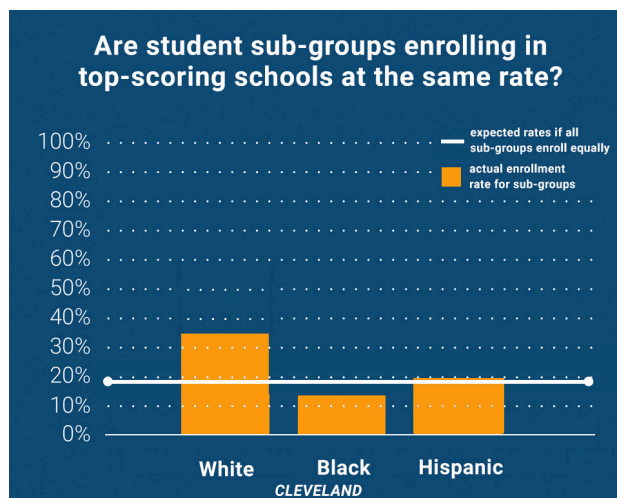*Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2011-12 to 2014-15.*

Do students have access to a high-quality education?

Does every neighborhood have a school that provides a quality education to low-income students?

EEI SCORE: High ■□□□□ Low

▶ The Education Equality Index (EEI) identifies how students from low-income families are performing in cities and schools across the country. See this interactive tool to explore individual school performance.

Data: The Education Equality Index (EEI) was supplied by Education Cities and GreatSchools. See their site for more detail.
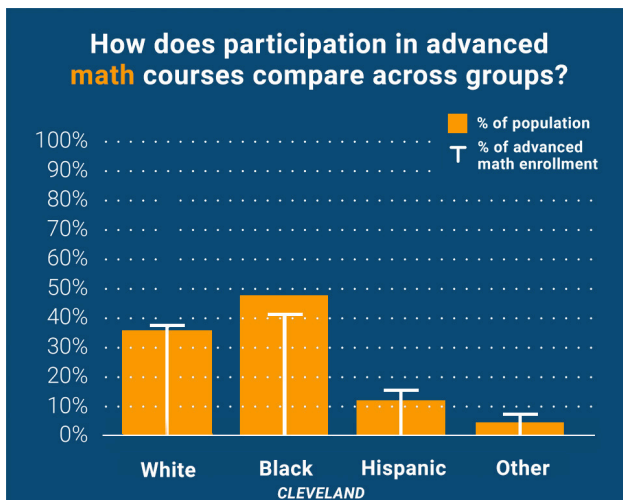
Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2010-11 to 2014-15; and National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2010-11 to 2014-15.

Are student sub-groups enrolling in top-scoring schools at the same rate?

— expected rates if all sub-groups enroll equally

■ actual enrollment rate for sub-groups

White   Black   Hispanic
CLEVELAND

▶ In 2013-14, 19% of students enrolled in the city's top-scoring schools. White students enrolled in top-scoring schools at higher rates than they enrolled in medium- and low-scoring schools.

Data: This figure shows whether students are equitably enrolled in the city's top-performing 20% of schools, with school ranking based on student proficiency in state reading assessments. Within a single student sub-group, we identify what percentage is enrolled in top-, middle-, and low-performing schools. If the share of students enrolled in top-scoring schools citywide and the share of a particular sub-group are similar, this means that the sub-group is equally distributed across low-, middle-, and top-scoring schools.

Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2011-12 to 2013-14.

How does participation in advanced math courses compare across groups?

■ % of population

⊤ % of advanced math enrollment

White   Black   Hispanic   Other
CLEVELAND

▶ In 2013-14, all student sub-groups in the city were enrolled in advanced math coursework at similar rates as in high school.

Data: Enrollment of students in math courses above Algebra II. Rates calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled in advanced math by the number of students in the school. Sub-group rates determined at the school level.

Source: U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2013-14.

Data & Scoring

Where did we get this data?

▶ Publicly available state and federal data, making our results comparable and reproducible.

▶ The most up-to-date data available for all 18 cities at the time of our data collection. See Methodology & Resources for more information.

What makes the data citywide?

▶ We include all charter and district schools within the municipal boundary of a city.

▶ In Houston, Indianapolis, Memphis, New Orleans, and San Antonio we use school data from multiple districts within the municipal boundary.

About Cleveland

Reform and improvement efforts in Cleveland are guided by *Cleveland's Plan for Transforming Schools*, a local levy and improvement strategy first approved by voters in 2012 and again with the levy's renewal in 2016. The Plan brings together CMSD, charter leaders, and local elected officials. The Transformation Alliance, a cross-sector organization, advocates for the Cleveland Plan and engages the community. Since 2012, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) has had a school autonomy strategy that includes every school. CMSD is continuing to increase school-level flexibilities and adjust the central office to better support the strategy.

School Choice in the City

Families are informed of their neighborhood elementary schools, but they can choose among all CMSD schools using the district-run lottery. The city also has about 65 charter schools.

Governance Model

Cleveland's Board of Education is made up of nine voting members appointed by the mayor from a slate of nominees selected by a local nominating panel, established under state law. The city is served by nine different charter authorizers, called sponsors, in Ohio.

2017 District and Charter Student Body

Enrollment: 55,600 students
Race and ethnicity: 65% black, 16% Hispanic, 15% white, 4% other

2017 School Composition
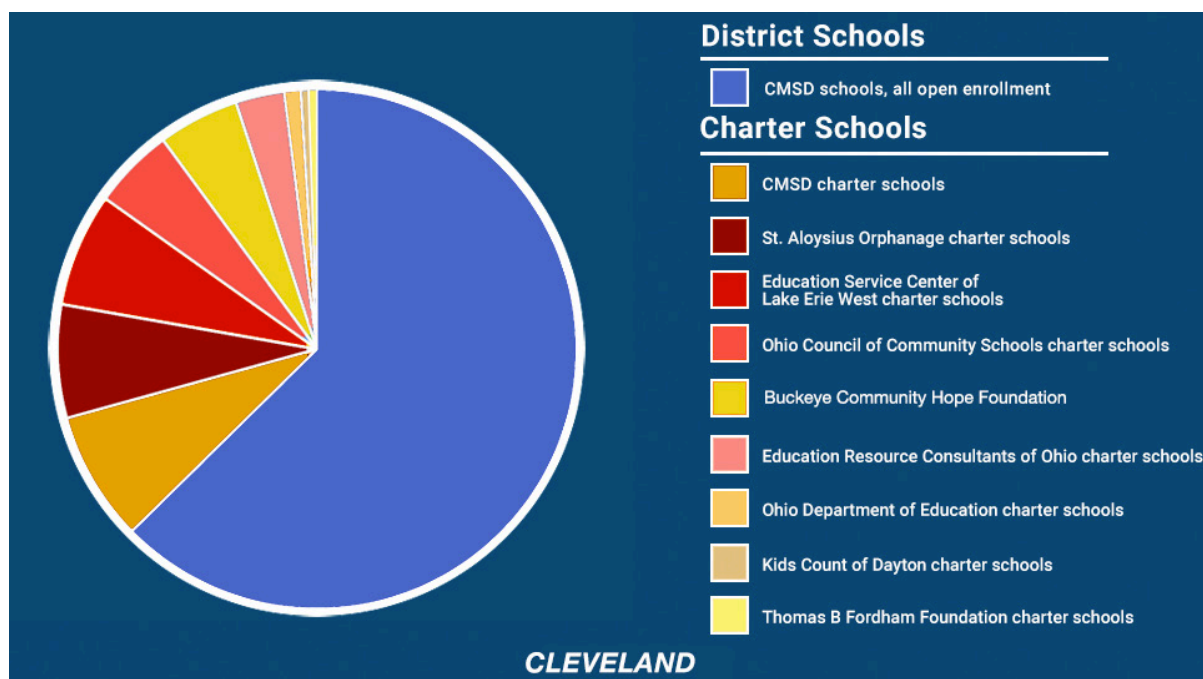
Source: Enrollment data for district and charter schools from Cleveland Transformation Alliance, 2017.
School data from researcher analysis of public records, 2016-17.

About This Project

The Citywide Education Progress Report looks at how a city is doing across three goals:

- The education system is continuously improving

- All students have access to a high-quality education

- The education strategy is rooted in the community

Across each goal we present indicators of what the cities are doing (what we call "system reforms") and how they are doing (what we call "outcomes").

Our city reports focus on education strategies for the 2017-18 school year. Our analyses reflect developments through June 2018. These are updates to our original reports from the 2016-17 school year.

To understand how well cities are doing, we used state and federal data to track school improvement, graduation rates, and student access to high-quality schools. Our student and school data cover the 2011-2012 to 2014-2015 school years. To understand city strategies and identify early progress, we relied on interviews, surveys, public documents, and news articles from 2014-2015 to the present. This analysis uses data for district and charter schools to look at all schools within municipal boundaries, rather than just one sector or district.

We cannot say that employing a certain strategy will lead to a particular result, or even whether a particular strategy is effective in these cities. But the reports can help us to see how a strategy is working, what problem areas remain, and which cities are seeing promising results.

The 18 cities in this study include Atlanta, Boston, Camden, Cleveland, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Memphis, New Orleans, New York City, Oakland, Philadelphia, San Antonio, Tulsa, and Washington, D.C.

> To learn more about the project, compare other cities, and read the cross-city analysis, visit:
>
> **research.crpe.org/projects/stepping-up**

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